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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/689,487

10/20/2003

Thomas W. Davison

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CROMPTON, SEAGER & TUFTE, LLC
1221 NICOLLET AVENUE
SUITE 800
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55403-2420

EXAMINER

WOODALL, NICHOLAS W

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3733

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

07/19/2007

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/689,487

Applicant(s)

DAVISON, THOMAS W.

Examiner

Nicholas Woodall

Art Unit

3733

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 29 June 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 18-23, 25-27, 30-36, 38-41 and 46-48 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 18-23, 25-27, 30-36, 38-41 and 46-48 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 20 October 2003 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

1. This action is in response to applicant's amendment received on 06/29/2007.

Allowable Subject Matter

2. The indicated allowability of claims 24, 25, 29, 30, and 37-41 is withdrawn in view of the newly discovered reference(s) to Zdeblick (U.S. Patent 6,206,922). Rejections based on the newly cited reference(s) follow.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 18-22, 26, 27, 31-35, and 46-48 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Foley (U.S. Patent 5,792,044) in view of Ash (WO 8303189 A1).

Regarding claims 18-22, 26, 27, 31-35, and 46-48, Foley discloses a system comprising an elongated body that can be usable with at least two fasteners (column 15 lines 3-20) and an elongated viewing element, which can be mounted to the elongated body (column 5 lines 51-65). The elongated body defines an access path between the proximal end and the distal end. Regarding claims 46-48, Foley discloses a device wherein the access path comprises a substantially enclosed passage. Foley fails to disclose a system comprising an elongated body that is expandable at the distal end at a first location. Ash discloses a device for use in minimally invasive surgical procedures

that comprises an elongated body that is expandable at the distal end in order to provide viewing and operation room (page 2 lines 24-35). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to manufacture the elongated body of Foley with an expandable distal end in view of Ash in order to provide viewing and operation room.

Regarding claim 34, the combination of Foley and Ash disclose a device wherein the shape of the access device when expanded is at least partially conical.

5. Claims 18-23, 25-27, 30-36, 38-41, and 46-48 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Foley (U.S. Patent 5,792,044) in view of Ash (WO 8303189 A1) further in view of Zdeblick (U.S. Patent 6,206,922).

Regarding claims 18, 27, and 33, the combination of Foley and Ash disclose the invention as claimed except for the system further comprising a fixation element with at least two fasteners capable of being passed through the passage of an elongate element. Zdeblick teaches a system comprising a fixation element capable of being passed through the passage of an elongate element in order to fuse two adjacent vertebrae. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to manufacture the device of Foley modified by Ash further comprising a fixation element with at least two fasteners capable of being passed through the passage of an elongate element in view of Zdeblick in order to fuse to adjacent vertebrae.

Regarding claims 23 and 36, the combination of Foley, Ash, and Zdeblick disclose a device wherein the at least two fasteners are pedicle screws. The screws in

Art Unit: 3733

the Zdeblick reference are capable of being as pedicle screws and can be interpreted as such. Regarding claims 25, 30, and 38, the combination of Foley, Ash, and Zdeblick disclose a device wherein the fixation element is a rod. The fixation element of Zdeblick is a rod-shaped element that can be interpreted as a rod. Regarding claim 39, the combination of Foley, Ash, and Zdeblick disclose a device further comprising a locking member capable of holding the fixation element relative to the threaded fasteners. The Zdeblick reference teaches an embodiment wherein a locking screw (282) is added to prevent the threaded fasteners from backing out (see Figure 10 of Zdeblick reference). Regarding claim 40, the combination of Foley, Ash, and Zdeblick disclose a device wherein the threaded fasteners include a convex engagement surface at the proximal end. Regarding claim 41, the combination of Foley, Ash, and Zdeblick disclose a device further comprising a washer capable of engaging the convex engagement surface of the threaded fasteners. The Zdeblick reference teaches an embodiment wherein a washer (375) having holes (380) that are capable of engaging the convex surface of the threaded fasteners.

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 18-23, 25-27, 30-36, 38-41, and 46-48 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection. The examiner has presented new grounds of rejection as discussed above that were not necessitated by amendment making this office action non-final.

Conclusion

7. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. See PTO-892 for cited references the examiner felt were relevant to the application.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Nicholas Woodall whose telephone number is 571-272-5204. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Friday 8:00 to 5:30 EST..

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eduardo Robert can be reached on 571-272-4719. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

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EDUARDO C. ROBERT
SUPERVISOR, PATENT EXAMINER